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**(RE)CONSTRUCTING NARRATIVE IN DIGITAL LITERATURE:**

**A STUDY OF RED RIDING HOOD**

In the last two decades the availability of new digital tools and media formats has not only resulted in the a wave of electronic literature that has challenged the assumptions of “traditional” print formats; but it has also posed a challenge in terms of the method of creation of new narratives by reconstructing (and thereby recontextualizing) previous textual strategies. The Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) describes electronic literature as “works with important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer”. The computer then is not only an intrinsic part of the creative process but an inextricable one as well when it comes to the progression of the narrative i.e. story development. Furthermore, as Scott Rettberg points out, “writers and artists will always work with the materials available to them in their cultural moment, and the computer and network are now part of that toolkit” (“Electronic Literature, *John Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*).

Digital tools and the multiplicity of modalities they have allowed authorizes the creator of a story to restructure its oral or print modalities into a more open framework. For Adam Hammond, these modalities are text, still images, moving images and sound – which in turn are used across different mediums in a multiplicity of combinations (13). This combined with the idea of interactivity with and through the computer also puts emphasis on the listener’s choice and empathy– essentially placing the listener into the role of an active participant who also contributes to the meaning making process of the newly (re)created text. Hayles also points out the need for this connecting of print based expectations of narrative within the digital space while still “build[ing] on these expectations even as it modifies and transforms them” (4) by working thorough new media like games, film, animations which still build upon the idea of narrative space, either in a digital or virtual space.

This paper aims at tracing how the fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood across various times and genres, namely Brothers Grimm’s *Little Red Cap* and Charles Perrault’s *Little Red Riding Hood* in print; Neil Jordan’s *Company of Wolves* and David Kaplan’s *Little Red Riding Hood* as film adaptation; Blais, Frank & Ippolito’s *Little Red Riding Hood* and Donna Leishman’s *RedRidinghood* as digital texts, have evolved over time as representative narratives. However, the focus of the paper will not be on the historical, social or cultural evolution of fairy tales (though it is an aspect that cannot be ignored in any discussion), rather the paper is intended as an analysis of the narrative construction and reconstruction that has taken place over time, and the influence of new mediums that have evolved today (i.e. film and digital formats) that are only possible due to technological advances.

These texts under study move from the 17th century and up to the current era. *Little Red Riding Hood* has been well known throughout this time, which makes the different versions interesting to compare. The oral tradition inherent to fairytales also predisposes them to change and evolve with times, people, culture, and literary traditions. These reinventions are also only possible because of their recongnizibillity, which further contributes to their appeal. Furthermore, it confirms that regardless of the shape or form a fairytale comes in, there is always a link that is created between the teller/writer and the listener/reader. The reciprocal process of these two entities if what creates not only a referential framework, but it is this network of communication, this system of meaning construction, that has evolved with the advent of technology and its influence of literary production.

**Why *Little Red Riding Hood*?**

The fairy tale because it is “rich in potential meanings, and can take on diverse significances” (Teverson 6) depending on author, reader, listener, and teller, who can all potentially contribute and input meaning to the story. Fairy Tales have become an enduring art form that is rooted in author creativity that molds and shapes the experience of narrative. Moreover, according to Jack Zipes in *The Irresistible Fairy Tale*, it is this genre that has captured human imagination as the vehicle for transmitting creative and created narratives for thousands of years. Not only because of the adaptability of fairytale narrative and symbolic structure, but also because the majority of us have grown up hearing these stories in one form or another – from the original oral format to the more recent film adaptations and now, the electronic formats that have become a recognizable genre in the digital age we currently live in. In fact we would not be wrong to say that, “a fairy tale is different every time it is told, and takes colour and texture from the context of the telling” (Warner, x).

The story of the little girl in the red hood has become a recognizable entity globally because it is a story that appeals not only due to its conventional elements but also due to the unconventional ones. The main plot of Little Red Riding Hood is that a young girl is sent by her mother to bring her grandmother something to eat and drink. On her way through the forest, she meets a wolf. Since she escapes him during the trek through the forest, the wolf in the guise of the grandmother exacts his revenge. It is by these tropes that we recognize the story, regardless of it being oral, written, visual, or digital. The elements or motifs like the red hood, the picking of flowers, the two paths in the wood, the character of the wolf, the grandmother, the huntsman, the iconic conversation of things being unnatural or abnormal – allow for any possibilities when it comes to narrative possibilities.

As to the unconventional, what distinguishes the narrative from other fairytales is the fact that there is no trope of marriage or happily ever after. This opens up the tale to a multiplicity of thematic and socially significant themes as well. Additionally, there is no prince or direct male family member in the story. The narrative in fact can more easily fit into the very untraditional idea of a heroic rite of passage action being performed by a girl - an idea that would be revolutionary in the classic version of Little Red Riding Hood; if not so much in its more contemporary reincarnations. This paper argues that the didactic function of fairy tales when contrasted with the digital ones have resulted in a reappropriation of the story’s tropes and motifs in a way that allows for more freedom in thematic construction and social meaning within the bounds of the narrative.

**Narrative Constructions in Electronic Literature**

“Narrative involves an implicit order dictated by chronology and causality, while a database is a collection of documents that can be consulted by the user in any order. But if the database is properly structured and if the subject matter is appropriate, the free probes of the users and their always incomplete exploration will not prevent the retrieval of narrative meaning” (Ryan “The Interactive Onion” 40).

The rise of electronic text also has an affinity to the debate of post structuralism and deconstruction in terms of critical and literary theory. The possibilities created by electronic textuality hark back to the formula of the medium being the message, one of the core ideals of postmodernism as a whole. In fact, Ronald Barthes description of the potential of signification within a text in his essay S/Z seems pertinent to the idea of hypertextuality as well:

In this ideal text the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the code it mobilizes extends as far as the eye can reach…the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text. (5-6)

This then implies that the questioning of existing models for narrative analysis (used for print literature) as to their validity is inevitable– which in turn is complicated by the varieties of electronic literature, which are richly diverse, spanning all the types associated with print literature and adding some genres unique to networked and programmable media. Additionally, by the time the World Wide Web developed, new authoring programs and methods of dissemination became available and consequently the nature of electronic literature changed as well.

Some examples of first generation narrative works include Michael Joyce's *Twelve Blue*, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* and Joseph Weizenbaum’s *Eliza* to name a few. All of them are based on hypertext and are constructed as lexias (blocks of text as individual nodes) that are intersectionally linked to each other albeit with limited graphics, animation, colors, and sound – mostly due to the limitations of the machines and the software. Thus, we can define them as:

“works published in stand-alone format either on computer disc or (later) on CD that rely on hypertext authoring systems for the construction of narrative texts made up of nodes interlinked in a network. This form of digital fiction was popularly known as hypertext fiction, hyperfiction, and literary hypertext”(Ciccoricco “Digital Fiction” 473).

Second generation works would on the other hand make a more extensive use of the multimodality made possible by the range of options made available by the Web. These later works thus used a wide variety of navigation schemes and interface interactivity. Some examples would include works like Jim Andrews’ *Stir Fry Texts*, Donna Leishman’s *The Possession of Christian Shaw* and Kate Pullinger’s *Inanimate Alice*. In fact, these “web-based fiction … gave writers cause to test the limits of limitlessness, so to speak, in a digital environment in which all texts are, in theory, boundless and equidistant. Indeed, some writers embraced this brand of freedom vigorously” (Ciccoricco “Digital Fiction” 475).

The multimodality that is introduced into the construction of texts (such as those mentioned above) with the help of electronic mediums has resulted in works that challenge the traditional critical praxis for it requires new interpretive traditions to understand the aesthetic strategies and possibilities of electronic literature as it is being produced now. Rather than talking about literature only being ‘digitized’ to works which are ‘born digital’ and the narrative intentionality that is a key aspect of these works. For David Ciccorico, the term network fiction, which he defines as that which “makes use of hypertext technology in order to create emergent and recombinatory narratives” (“Reading Network Fiction” 4) and it differs from other works of electronic literature in not only in its nonhierarchical organization but also in that its narrative emerges gradually through a recombination of elements” (“Reading Network Fiction” 6). Rather than focusing on the Aristotelian features of “causality, agency and intention”, electronic literature functions by establishing a database of possibilities offered by how the nodes within a narrative are transversed by the reader/user with the help of computer interfaces and commands. Furthermore, he distinguishes Hypertext Fiction from Interactive fiction as one having more clearly the influence of play elements. However, both types serve the function of offering multiple reading paths through a narrative. Both require the user to make choices, and these choices affect how the narrative proceeds in both the literal and interpretive sense by creating a reading experience that is recurrent, self reflexive and expansive. (Ciccoricco “Reading Network Fiction” 25-7).

This is also why according to Marie-Laure Ryan in *Avatars of Story*, the classical idea of narratology or narrative construction no longer works. Rather, what is needed is a model based on the reconceptualization of traditional building blocks of story i.e. character, themes, plot etc. She feels that with the emergence of digital texts the most significant aspect to consider, other than the medial ones, is the role of interactivity, its role in the creating a story, and the need for a convergence between the textual architecture created by the author/creator and the input of the reader/viewer (99).

While a lot of this has to do with, once again, the types of electronic texts we as readers are dealing with, it is also a challenge for the reader and user of these digital texts to not only learn to navigate through the story but also to realize that some level of interactivity (literal and/or metaphorical) is a necessary part in the progression of the narrative. The reason being that electronic and digital texts do not consist of stable marks/inscriptions which is the hallmark of print literature – rather there is a complex textuality that involves active input from the reader that ranges from clicking on a hyperlink in a hypertext to typing a response to a narrative prompt in interactive fiction or moving an avatar through virtual spaces in more immersive narratives.

**Analytical Framework**

As these works are designed to be read/viewed/interacted with, the works lend themselves to the question of interdiscursivity in narratological terms. Interdiscursivity here refers to “the heterogeneity of texts, how they fold within them other texts, other utterances, and draw upon multiple discoursal contexts” (Bartesaghi and Noy). In terms of electronic literature this intermediation takes place not only between multiple texts but also between machine and text (Hayles 45). The resultant interactivity is rooted in the very fact of electronic literature being multimodal. Thus, the debate about the role of interactivity in electronic literature leads to a meta-critical inquiry into the ways in which we read, think, and interpret information across mediums. In fact, how we move through these “dynamic hierarchies” (Hayles 48) in an electronic text determines what we read and therefore how we interpret it. This is why we can say that it potentially offers the readers more agency and even a sense of partial owner/authorship over the text – something printed texts cannot achieve.

The framework combining the idea of interactivity, interdiscursivity and intertextuality allows for the analysis to determine how the role of author-user influences the construction of meaning in a multimodal narrative space. The focus will be on the compositional, the semiotic, and the discursive elements in the selected works.

**Narrative Constructions in Film**

**The Printed Narrative – Perrault’s *Little Red Riding Hood* (1697) and Grimm’s *Little Red Cap* (1812)**

The earliest versions of the story of Red Riding Hood date back to 10th century France and later on in the 14th century in the Italian oral traditions. It was not until the 17th century, at the hands of Charles Perrault that the written version of the story was popularly known within the upper or educated classes as a story that had moral overtones. Perrault also introduced the motif of the red cape to the story of the young girl, an image that is also prolific in the portraits of that time period. Similarly, The Grimm’s brothers version also focused on illustrating for young girls the need for appropriate behaviour that would fit into their social status. It is the moralistic and didactic purpose of the narrative – coupled with the use of symbolic items - of Red that became the main focus of the story.

Perrault’s story had as its subject an “attractive, well-bred young lady”, from the country side who is deceived into giving a wolf she encountered the information he needed to find her grandmother’s house same grandmother who had had the “little red riding hood made for her”. The wolf, evading the woodcutters in the forest, then proceeds to the grandmother’s house and eats the old woman, after which he lays a trap for Red Riding Hood. Red in the meanwhile, was detouring off the path while gathering nuts and flowers. By the time the story ends, the wolf has convinced Red to climb into bed with him, at which point the story ends. The wolf is shown to be the victor and the story does not have the expected happily-ever-after ending of usual fairytales. Additionally, Perrault adds a ‘moral’ at the end so that there is no doubt as to his intended meaning:

“but there are various kinds of wolves. There are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all”.

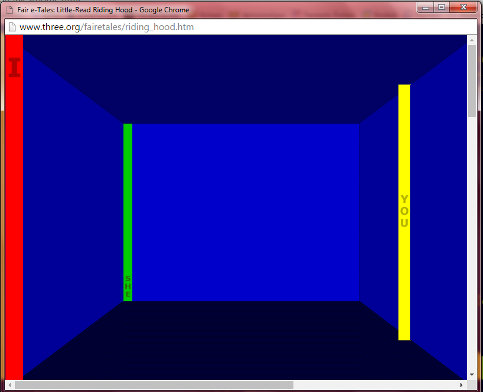
The Grimms’ version however is the more popularly known one. In their story, the little girl wears a red velvet cap, as opposed to the hood. The rest of the story follows the same narrative elements like the ailing grandmother, the basket of food, the wolf and the detour in the woods as Red takes a nap and collects flowers. Similarly, in both versions, Red notices that her grandmother looks different, that her eyes, ears, nose, and teeth are much bigger than she remembers. The conversation in the Grimms’ story is more in depth and the wolf’s actions described in more detail. It is at this point that the narrative diverges and stops short of being a cautionary tale into one of heroism. The societal norms are also reinforced by the presence of a Huntsman who saves the damsel in distress, as it were. He cuts open the wolf’s stomach and saves the grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood. Then the cavity is filled with stones. When the wolf wakes up and tries to run away, he fell dead. The only moral note that enters in Red’s last dialogue "As long as I live, I will never leave the path and run off into the woods by myself if mother tells me not to".

There are many thematic and narrative parallels as visible in the two print versions of the story, from the sexual, to the moral, to a more fabulist approach. This is also why the story has been read from a feminist point of view as depicting patriarchal power as well. Furthermore, it has led to multiple film, novel, art, visual representations, and reconstructions of the story. Interestingly, the Grimms’ version was expanded in 1857 by adding a corollary to the story where the wolf survives, comes back, and is tricked into falling to his death by the Grandmother and Red who had learnt from their previous experience. The rewriting of the story again reinforces the narrative potential of this fairy tale, making it an excellent source material for more contemporary and computerized versions.

**Digital (Re)Construction I - Blais, Frank & Ippolito’s *Little Red Riding Hood* (2000)**

The first of the two digital versions selected for study belongs conceptually to the first generation of electronic literature – in that it is a hypertext, which creates links between multiple lexias (i.e. groups of texts). The story developed by Blais. Frank and Ippolito as part of a project entitled *Fair e-Tales*, the title itself a pun upon the old world spelling of fairy i.e. Faire. These are DHTML-based fables whose purpose according to the creators is to “suggest a new paradigm for hypertext fiction”. Their innovation moves beyond the traditions narrative structure that proceeds in a linear fashion only. In the case of the *Fair e-tales* the movement takes place across different lexias – three in this case - that are individually stable narratives between which the reader can navigate, but this movement does not impact the development of the overall story. What is however emphasized are the assumptions and motivations of the characters within the story. This forces us to interact with the text on a psychological, reflexive level – even more so than the traditional print text.

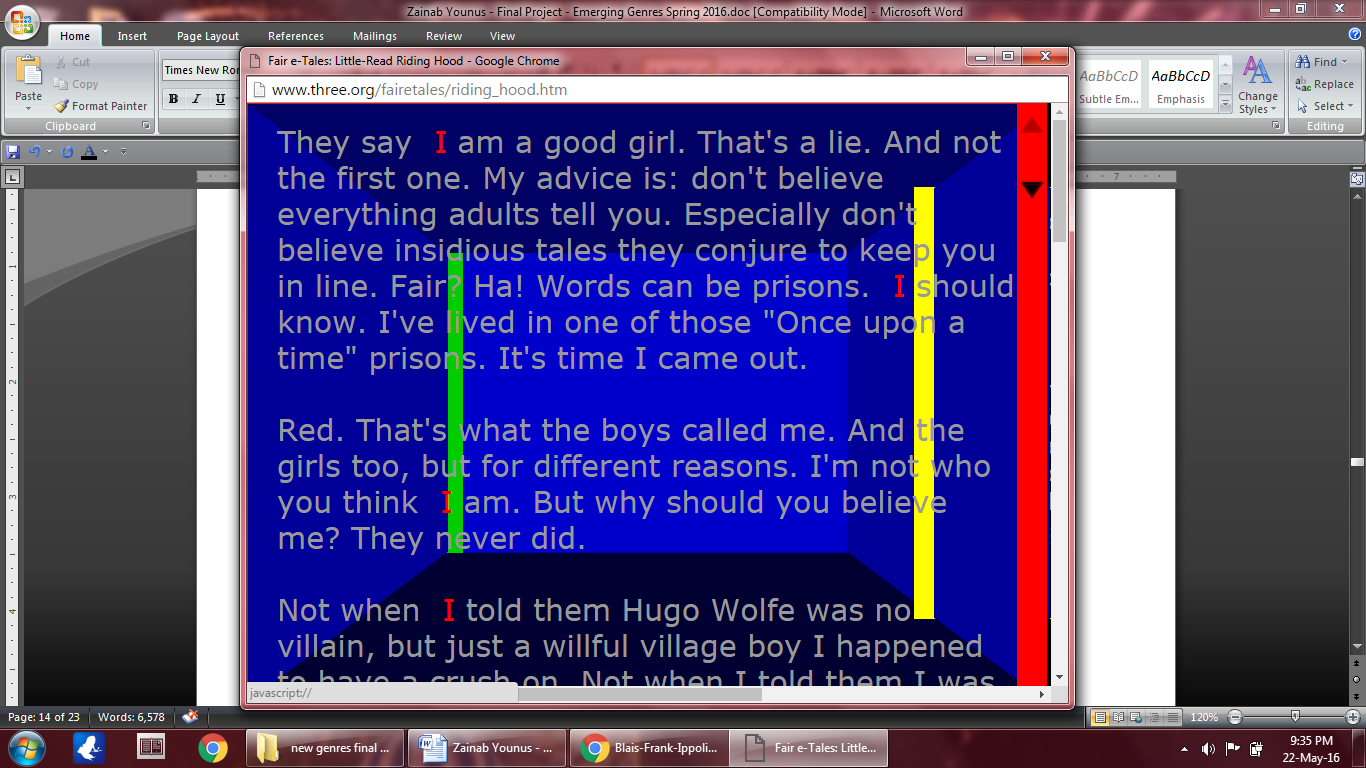
The story opens up with a page that is essentially like a hyperlinked table of contents in a traditional text. Clicking on the hyperlink for the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* opens up a new window i.e. a new ‘chapter’ within the ‘book’ of fairytales. The image we see then is that of a box like room, whose roof appears to be supported by three pillar in red, green and yellow with the words “I”, “She”, “You” inscribed on them. As readers we are immediately put in mind of the three voices in narrating a story – the first, second and third person. The design of the opening visual can be said to reinforce the need for a multi-perspectival approach towards reading and interpreting any story.



This choice of colours is also significant. By making the pillar “I”, which is in fact a hyperlink, we not only realize the this refers to the first person narrative voice of Red Riding Hood as a character, but the colour also can signal a potential for danger. By choosing this colour, the reader would make themselves deliberately enter the psyche of Red, and thereby become complicit with the actions that she undertakes. This type of parallelism creates a sense on immersion into the text, for the act of clicking on a hyperlink has a more sense of immediacy that would the act of turning a page in a book, for example.

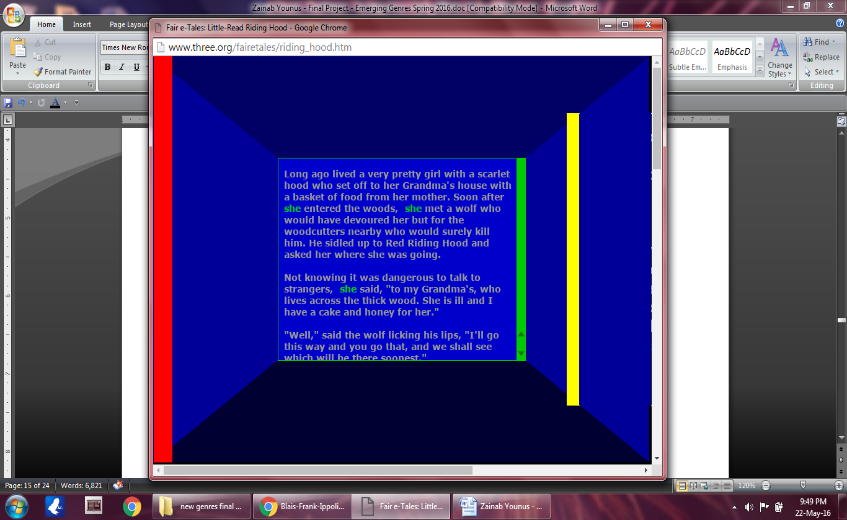
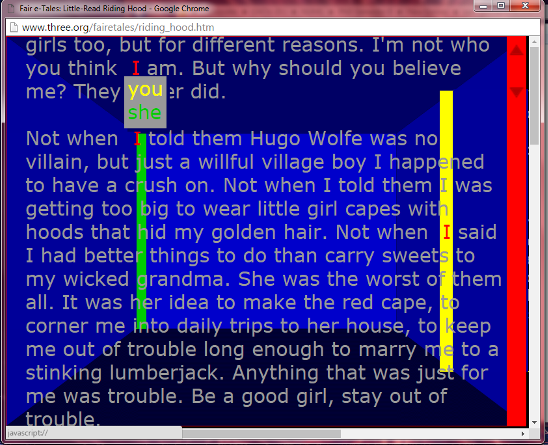
Similarly, by colouring the pillar for “She” green, we are being placed into a safe zone. In that a space is created around the reader’s persona and the character’s persona. Finally the third piller for “You” is yellow as its functions straddles the line between the objectivity offered by “She” and the immersive experience promised by “I”. The significance of the colours is also something that we as non-literary readers would also identify for it follows the commonly known pattern of a traffic signal.

Clicking on the first pillar for “I”, we are taken straight into the story from the point of view of Red Riding Hood. The colour association with the character again one that is obvious to any reader who is even vaguely familiar with the story’s printed genesis. The pillar slides to the right and transforms into a scrollbar by which we can move up and down the text block at will. Furthermore, the transparent background of the overlaid text also reminds us of the other potential points of view that the Hypertext has to offer to our narrative experience.



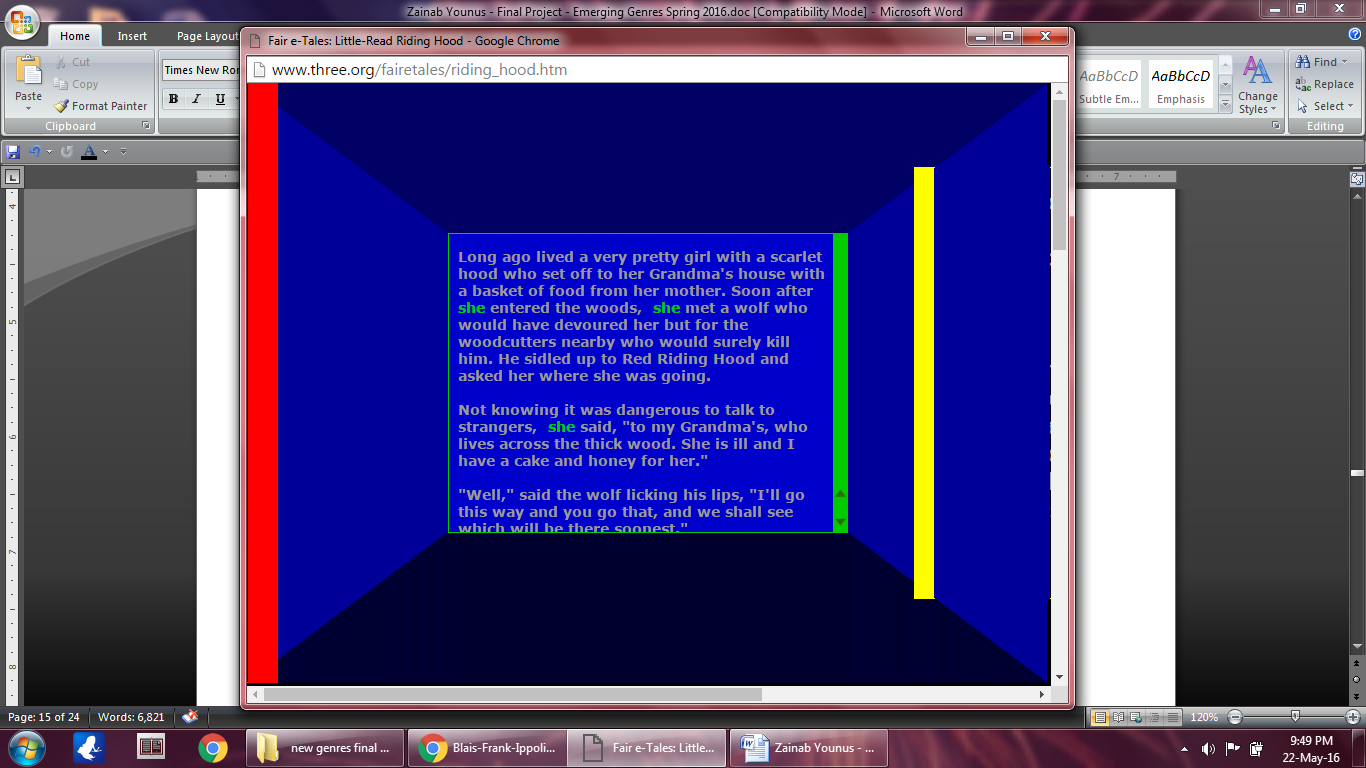
Red’s point of view sounds more like teenage girl’s litany of complaints against the world that we would ideally find in her private journal. She is shown to be on the verge of being an adult as she declares she is too “old for little girl’s capes”, which has been made by her “wicked grandmother” – a deviation from the classic print story, but indicative of a generational gap that is very much in tune with the postmodern social context. Another deviation is the character of the wolf who is transfigured into a boy named Hugo Wolfe who was killed by the grandmother for his daring to have a relationship with Red, as she says “They killed him for it. Not for being in that bed, but for daring to ask for my life. Not my hand. Not my honor. Not my property. But my life”.

This narrative arc is only one side of the story however. Every time the letter *I* comes in this first lexia, it is written in red and clicking on it we are again presented with three options by which we want to proceed through the text. At selecting one of the options, here it was “She”.



The first overlay recedes and a new one appears at the very back of the box image. The placement of the overlays thus is not an arbitrary one. The varying distances that accompany the three points of view become a visual symbol for how far we as readers can be from the narrative and from fully understanding it – all depending on the angle from which we are looking at the narrative.

The third person narrative follows all the traditional story elements and organization of plot. In fact, it is a linguistically and syntactically modernized version of Perrault’s story, ending with the iconic words “and he ate her all up”. Once again the visual text shows the word “She” in the colour green and clicking on it once more invited the reader into taking another, yet tangential, stroll through the narrative. Once again, a new overlay opens between the distance created by “I” and “She”. “You” allows us to remain consciousness of our own autonomy, while at the same time offering the possibility of immersion. In that, the function of this third lexia is more subtle in nature.



The third overlay is structured as a series of directives being given to us, the readers, who are meant to adopt the persona of Red for the duration of the narrative. The voice of the speaker we can infer to be that of the mother as she not only gives a list of instructions (for example, “This is how you sew a red velvet hood for your head”) but also dispenses advice (“Never talk to strangers”) and admonitions (“Are you listening to me?”) in equal parts. The writers/creators have been very through in their attempt to create paralles between all three narratives, something that would conceptually be easier in the shifts between “I” and “She”. However, even in this form of “You” they manage to instill the same impression. For example of the flower picking digression in the first two overlays, the third one correlates to it with the lines, “Don't dawdle and pick flowers and amble by the stream but go directly to her house and then come back home quickly”. This motherly voice appears wise and prescient especially with references like, “Be sure you are always polite to lumberjacks. You might need their help some day”. However the most striking of all these parallels is in the last few lines on the text:

“Come back. Please come back. Let it only be some silly accident that keeps you. Tripping on a log. Cutting your finger on the latch. Staying behind to help Grandma. Come back now. Now. Oh please. Oh God, if only you can remember to listen to me, nothing bad will happen to you. Will it?”

It is in this section more than any other that we find ourselves not only interactively but also emotionally and psychologically empathizing with all the various personas this multi-layered hypertext has created for us.

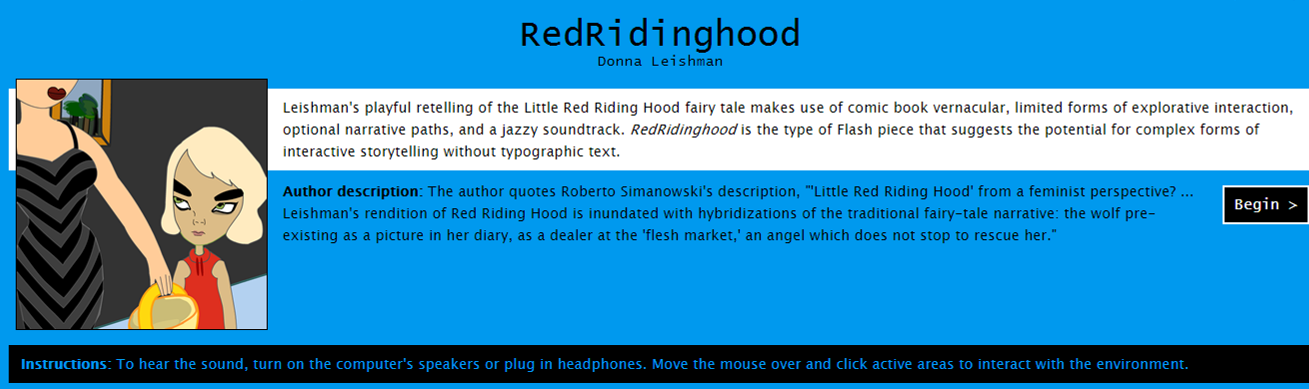
As we read through the textuality of this hypertext, we are meant to switch between points of view, and this is facilitated by all the pronouns (I, She, You) functioning as hyperlinks within the texts. By allowing the reader to move through and between the lexias, multiple possibilities are created in terms of how we relate to the text and which persona we find the most effective. These many interrelations between the main characters of the story means that the narrative construction has moved beyond the boundary imposed by print literature. The idea of a free willed destiny is also present in the hypertext fiction, as sense that the print versions lack, ultimately creating a story that is dynamic and fluid and still possessing the emotional appeal of all literary works.

This fluidity is further enhanced in adaptations written for the screen and the stage the biggest presence in film adaptations of Red Riding Hood that shows the transmediality of this character is through Neil Jordan’s adaptation of Angela Carter’s short story, *The Company of Wolves*, which lends a new dimension to the portrayal of this character. Yet this is a very different facet than the one shown through Blais et.al’s hypertext. For the purposes of this paper, rather than focusing on the actual print story, it is the screen play that Carter wrote in tandem with Neil Jordan for the story, and the subsequent film that was made based on it that will be studied.

**Digital (Re)Construction II - Donna Leishman’s *RedRidinghood* (2001)**

The story *RedRidinghood* is the second digital version chosen for analysis as its characteristics belong to those of the second generation electronic literature. It is an example of an Interactive Fiction (IF) that reconstructs Red Riding Hood’s story, following more closely the Grimms Brothers version, than Perrault’s. The author of the text, Donna Leishman has created a narrative that has elements of a written, visual and audio based digital story, which also includes a variety of interactive elements the encourages viewer/reader participation and involvement in the developing narrative. Additionally it also subverts the established motifs and tropes to fit in with the contemporary social normative praxis, than any of the versions.

The IF opens with a still screen that functions as would the cover page of a book. It includes a short blurb as well as instructions about how to progress through the story and the digital elements that can be found within it. The direction given at the bottom of the page further remind us that the environment with which this narrative has been created will be a multimodal one. Consequently, as we progress through the story, we find that it makes use of sound, animation, game play elements as well as hypertext, multi-window networks, and flash poetry.



The visual elements are basic in terms of the style of artwork, which is an interesting contrast to the audio soundtrack that is multilayered and changes with each story element. As the piece was created in 2001, we can assume that the simplicity of the artwork can be due to the availability of graphic tools. However, complexity is added via the choice of colors, which is deliberate and carefully planned to complement the themes of the story.

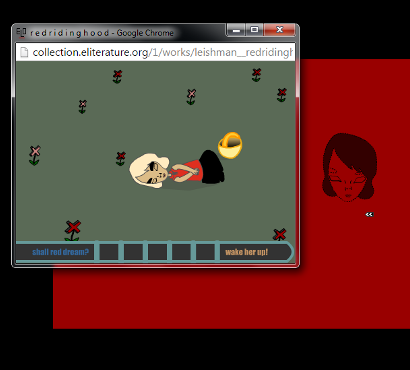


The use of a red background for the user interface plays upon the title of the story. It also has a symbolic function for the themes of the story that revolve around life, death, love and birth – each of which can be connected to the colour red. The themes from the print versions are thus incorporated visually and symbolically into the narrative without recourse to the words. The symbolic interpretation is given depth by the change in the tab label, which rather than giving the name of the page, now reads, “they are evil”.

An element of play is introduced from the start also, as we have to click on the title for the screen to become an animation. An unexpected interactive element also comes when we discover that various designs are created by moving the cursor over the text. As readers, we also realize that this is an aspect of fun, rather than a necessary narrative element by the inclusion of a hyperlink button on the bottom right hand corner (traditionally where a page number would be placed) with the option to “skip”.

The work also introduces a comic book format with the introduction of a speech bubble, which again is a hyperlink that leads us to the first part of the story. The comic book format is also reinforced when a new window opens, which is similar to the act of an individual panels on a page. The reader now becomes a viewer or consumer of the text as they participate into the world that has been created, both through the visuals and through the interaction of mouse clicks. The progression of the narrative within this world can thus be non-linear an d multi-spatial.

The story does have a clear structure in terms of having a definite starting and ending, the possibilities of e-lit are seen when we realize that the narrative offers two different pathways that can be chosen by the reader. The first comes when we are shown individuals windows on a skyscraper, one of which leads to the room with Red and her mother.



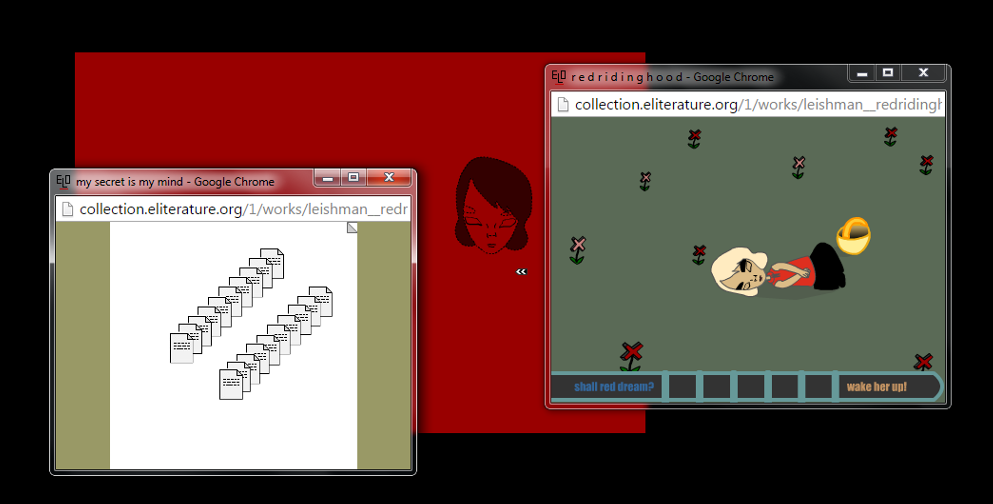
By clicking on the window, we become part of the world that has been created. The change in music also corresponds to the change in scene and becomes a barometer by which we can judge our progress through the narrative. The next sequence comes when we realize the narrative will not continue until we find and click on the next hyperlink, which in this case is implied rather that explicitly shown. We click on the view outside the window to see Red walking through a forest, and being followed by a wolf (with the accompanying change in sound). The animal transforms into a boy on a skateboard with a wolf’s paws who tries to interact with Red but is rejected. We then see Red collecting flowers in a field, where she falls asleep and here we are given a choice about how to proceed. This kind of interactivity allows us to alter the experience of the story and additionally feel complicit in the outcome that is eventually reached.

The two options we now have are “shall red dream?” and “wake her up!” located at the bottom of the screen. This is another example of hypertext and clicking on either is necessary to continue onwards in the story. The first selection opens a new window the is labeled “we can dream can’t we” and is a deviation from the main story line as it takes us into a slightly bizarre world where we see a bedroom with many interactive features, like disembodied heads whose eyes flash yellow, a journal that reads “Do Not Enter”. We then see Red, in a new outfit, approach the entrance of a building whose sign reads meat market. Inside, we have to figure out how to navigate through the story until we finally find the Wolf Boy, at which point we see a screen (an an overlapping audio soundtrack) of floating eyeballs. The visual freezes until there is the sound of an alarm, indicating that this version of the narrative has reached its conclusion. It is also interesting to note here that the narrative in not linear in the traditional sense, but at the same time it is also not non-linear, as we cannot restart this sequence for a second viewing. In fact, in we close the window, the relevant hyperlink we find has become inert and the only option we have is to follow the second path in the narrative.

In the second or alternate story arc, Red immediately wakes up and goes to her grandmother’s house. This arc is also in line with the original text as we see that the Wolf has eaten the grandmother and is waiting for Red, in bed, to arrive. The animated sequence is once more wordless and relies on the audio element to invoke a change in tone and atmosphere. The deviation in this narrative is that in the original, the wolf eats Red, while here, the impression (as we are not shown this explicitly) is that the little girl has eaten the wolf, and laid down on the best to rest with a full belly – an implication that is more dependent on our awareness of Red’s body language and facial expressions, along with the change in camera angle. An element of dark fantasy is enters the story when we see, by moving the mouse cursor over the girl’s belly, that her has become pregnant. Moreover, we as readers are left to wonder if this is the Wolf’s child.

Calling *RedRidinghood* a new version of an old story is substantiated by the fact that it is based on the same background elements as the story of Little Red Riding Hood, In that a little girl is asked by her mother to take a basket to her grandmother’s house, on the way she meets a wolf, and ends with the girl finding out that the wolf had eaten the grandmother and taken her place. A new functionality is given to the classic story by telling the story through a video with which the reader must interact in order to progress through the story. The first half of the story is a wordless visual. The only words that are related to the story are displayed on the first screen “Once upon a not so far away” before the video runs. By reconceptualizing the story in this format, it is given a new style but at the same time assumes an intertextual framework with the original text. The way the story is constructed, Leishman is assuming that her readers are already familiar with the story and thus do not require a textual component to elucidate the visuals. One explanation for this could be that we as readers are be prepared that the original cannot and should not be referenced fully. This is borne out as the story moves to towards the second half, which is diametrically different and yet still ontologically connected to the old.

For a digital story narrative that is both textual and visual, the possibilities of meanings are further amplified with additional background information given via a user interface that compels a more contextualized reading of the narrative based on the author’s intentions. We discover that in her basket, Red is carrying her journal that is filled with pages of text, illustrations, accompanying sound and pop-culture references.



The opening page of the journal is a picture of the Wolf Boy followed by the startling information that “I love him”, “this isn’t happening” and “you broke my heart”. The journal reads like the diary of a person involved in a relationship whose progress and eventual failure we can see chronicled in its twenty plus pages. The window title “my secret is my mind” gives an illicit impression regarding the relationship, especially as we learn that Red was pregnant and is consequently killed by a stranger.

The narrative thus proves very much to be a postmodern text, not only due to its metafictional and intertextual elements but also due to its multimodality and use of pastiche in creating a narrative that is expansive and yet is inherently structured via the guidance system of the user interface. It is because of the digital medium, in congruence with the written, visual, and audio elements that the story moves beyond what a traditional print format can achieve. With a print book, we are forced to imagine what type of woods Little Red Riding may have walking through or what noises she would have heard. Leishman provides us with visuals and sounds all throughout the IF, so we receive her story in more dimensions of meaning than we could with a print version.

**Conclusion**

Stories endure. Whether we change their genre, form, or even the tools by and through which the narrative reaches us, the readers. As can be seen from the study, the intertextual links between the traditional print versions written as early as the 17th Century and the contemporary digital/electronic versions created as late as the 21st Century are very much present. Yet this does not detract from the more technological innovations that the latter have made in terms of narrative progression, construction, and the discursive experience.

One of the things that stands out in the e-literature versions is the autonomy given to the female protagonist, Red Riding Hood. Though the feminist impulse was not the focus of the paper, yet it is still one that is hard to miss. Additionally, both the e-lits are reminiscent to the oral traditions of storytelling, especially with regards to its dynamism and willingness to adapt to changing perceptions – something that strongly contrasts with the didactic tone of the printed, male centered narratives of Perrault and The Grimms. Other than the themes, all four versions use the tropes associated with Red Riding Hood interchangeably for the most part. It is rather the multimedial approach taken by digital fictions that allows for an expansion of the narrative boundaries. For example, one of the most significant moments in the story if when Red diverges from the direct path to grandmother’s house – thereby allowing the wolf to reach there first. One of the writers uses this idea of ‘diverging paths’ as an opportunity to introduce multiple windowed and flash animations, connected by elements of play i.e. interactivity. The other digital version uses the dame idea of paths to create a hypertextual web across various text blocks.

By introducing such possibilities of navigating through the narrative of digital fictions, the reader/user of these ‘programs’ as it were becomes aware of their own power to influence the progression of the story – and this is done through the intermediation of text, human and machine. As is also apparent in the play of the title text in Leishman or in the sliding overlays in Blais et.al. the computer can also be a tool by which we engage with and influence the text. This is the key factor when it comes to not only reading but rather experiencing a hypertext or an interactive fiction. It is at this point that our assumptions of reading fail, if we do not move beyond those applicable to print based texts. As it challenges our assumptions about narrative constructions, it also encourages us to adopt a similar openness and flexibility to real world narratives that are so much a part of our daily life. By allowing for a more dynamic relationship between the creator and consumer in terms of meaning making systems, we imbue ourselves with more power and control over our interactions in the material world.

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